

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 132906

FOLLOWING REPEAT BOGOTA 4912 ACTION SECSTATE INFO SAN JOSE
DATED MAY 23, 1978.

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 4912

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, EPAP, CU, CS, CO, PARM

SUBJ: UNDERSECRETARY NEWSOM'S CONVERSATIONS WITH PRESIDENT
LOPEZ AND FOREIGN MINISTER LIEVANO

1. SUMMARY. IN THE UNDERSECRETARY'S CONVERSATIONS WITH PRESIDENT LOPEZ AND FOREIGN MINISTER LIEVANO. THE FOLLOWING POINTS, AMONG OTHERS, WERE DISCUSSED: NARCOTICS - LOPEZ REMARKED ON "LEAKS" WHICH REFLECTED UNFAVORABLY ON COLOMBIA. THE UNDERSECRETARY REGRETTED THESE AND HOPED THEY WOULD NOT IMPEDE CONTINUED USG-GOC COOPERATION. TRADE-THE UNDERSECRETARY STRESSED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WAS NOT GIVING WAY TO PROTECTIONIST PRESSURES AND SUGGESTED THAT COLOMBIA MAKE GREATER USE OF THE MTN. COFFEE-LOPEZ COMPLAINED ABOUT USG UNRESPONSIVENESS REGARDING THE COFFEE REFERENCE PRICE. CUBA-LOPEZ EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER WHAT HE BELIEVED TO BE CUBAN EFFORTS TO GAIN INFLUENCE AMONG THE BLACK POPULATIONS OF THE CARIBBEAN AND CENTRAL AMERICA. COSTA RICA-LOPEZ FEARED THAT ACTIONS BY COSTA RICA'S NEW PRESIDENT MIGHT JEOPARDIZE COLOMBIA'S CLOSE TIES WITH
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THAT COUNTRY. END SUMMARY.

2. THE FOLLOWING ARE SALIENT POINTS IN CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN UNDERSECRETARY NEWSOM AND PRESIDENT LOPEZ AND FOREIGN MINISTER LIEVANO ON MAY 22.

3. PRESIDENT LOPEZ, TOGETHER WITH FOREIGN MINISTER LIEVANO,

RECEIVED UNDERSECRETARY NEWSOM, WHO WAS ACCOMPANIED BY THE AMBASSADOR, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY MCNEIL AND POLITICAL COUNSELOR. THE UNDERSECRETARY CONVEYED THE PRESIDENT'S APPRECIATION FOR LOPEZ' ASSISTANCE REGARDING THE PANAMA CANAL NEGOTIATIONS AND FOR GOC COOPERATION IN NARCOTICS INTERDICTION. PRESIDENT LOPEZ REFERRED TO A LETTER HE HAD SENT TO PRESIDENT CARTER SOME MONTHS AGO (STATE 286155) IN WHICH LOPEZ SAID THAT HE HAD FORESEEN PRESENT DIFFICULTIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN. EVEN COSTA RICA COULD BE IN FOR SOME TROUBLE. LOPEZ SAID THAT CARAZO'S VICTORY WAS A SURPRISE TO EVERYONE (APPARENTLY MEANING EVEN TO CARAZO). HE DEPLORED CARAZO'S LACK OF PREPARATION FOR THE PRESIDENCY AND REMARKED THAT CARAZO'S EXPRESSED INTENT NOT TO MAKE ANY FOREIGN TRIPS AND TO REDUCE THE SIZE OF HIS DIPLOMATIC CORPS RAN COUNTER TO AN INCREASED NEED FOR DIPLOMATIC CONSULTATIONS AND ACTIVITY BETWEEN COLOMBIA AND COSTA RICA REGARDING PANAMA. (COMMENT: AN APPARENT REFERENCE TO COLOMBIA'S INTEREST IN OBTAINING FROM PANAMA A CONTINUANCE OF ITS CANAL TRANSIT RIGHTS, PRESENTLY GUARANTEED BY THE THOMSON-URRUTIA TREATY, WHICH PANAMA HAS ALSO PROMISED TO COSTA RICA). LOPEZ OBVIOUSLY FELT THAT IF CARAZO'S STATED INTENTIONS WERE CARRIED OUT, THEY WOULD HAVE A HARMFUL EFFECT ON SUCH ACTIVITY.

4. LOPEZ BROUGHT UP THE SUBJECT OF "LEAKS" REGARDING CHARGES OF CORRUPTION AND THE DRUG TRAFFIC IN COLOMBIA. MR. NEWSOM SAID WE REGRETTED THESE AND HOPED THAT THEY WOULD NOT STAND IN THE WAY OF OUR CONTINUED COOPERATION.
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5. HARKING BACK TO HIS ORIGINAL REMARKS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF COFFEE AND SUGAR PRICES TO THE STABILITY OF PRODUCING COUNTRIES, LOPEZ COMPLAINED ABOUT THE "UNRESPONSIVENESS" OF US OFFICIALS REGARDING THE REFERENCE PRICE FOR COFFEE WHICH IS TO BE DISCUSSED IN LONDON IN OCTOBER. ALTHOUGH THE GOC HAD NOT PREVIOUSLY RAISED THIS QUESTION WITH THE EMBASSY, IT HAD BEEN DISCUSSED BY THE COLOMBIANS WITH THE USG IN WASHINGTON. THE UNDERSECRETARY SAID HE WOULD EXPLORE THIS ON HIS RETURN TO WASHINGTON.

6. IN AN ENSUING DISCUSSION OF US-COLOMBIA TRADE RELATIONS, THE UNDERSECRETARY EXPLAINED TO LOPEZ THE DOMESTIC U.S. PRESSURES FOR GREATER PROTECTION, BUT EMPHASIZED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WAS NOT ACCEDING TO THESE PRESSURES. HE POINTED OUT THE U.S. COULD BEST HELP ITS TRADING PARTNERS THROUGH MTN AGREEMENTS, AND THAT SOME CONCESSIONS TO THE U.S., EVEN IF NOT TOTALLY RECIPROCAL, WERE NECESSARY. LOPEZ SUGGESTED THAT COLOMBIA WAS IN A BETTER POSITION TO RECIPROCATATE FOR U.S. TRADE ADVANTAGES IN THE POLITICAL FIELD, AND STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE TO THE U.S. OF THE SUPPORT GIVEN IN INTERNATIONAL ENDEAVORS BY DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES SUCH AS COLOMBIA. HE AGREED WITH UNDERSECRETARY NEWSOM'S REJOINDER ABOUT THE DIFFICULTY OF CONVERTING SUCH POLITICAL ACTS INTO TRADE CONCESSIONS.

7. LOPEZ RETURNED TO ONE OF HIS FAVORITE THEMES REGARDING CUBA BY CLAIMING THAT A MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY GOAL OF CASTRO WAS TO GAIN INFLUENCE AMONG THE BLACK POPULATIONS OF THE CARIBBEAN AND CENTRAL AMERICA. HE POINTED TO DISTURBANCES OVERRECENT YEARS IN TRINIDAD, CURACAO AND JAMAICA AND SAID THAT HE DID NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE CUBANS WERE ASSISTING CURRENT JAMAICAN EFFORTS TO STIR UP THE BLACK POPULATIONS OF THE COLOMBIAN-OWNED ISLANDS OF SAN ANDRES AND PROVIDENCIA.

8. EARLIER IN THE DAY THE UNDERSECRETARY CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER LIEVANO ACCOMPANIED BY AMBASSADOR ASECIO, MR. MCNEIL AND THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR. THE UNDERSECRETARY CONGRATULATED LIEVANO ON THE LIKELIHOOD OF HIS BECOMING THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF UNGA.
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LIEVANO SAID THAT HE WOULD NOT ATTEND THE SSOD IN NEW YORK AND WENT ON TO EXPRESS HIS GENERAL PESSIMISM FOR THE PROSPECTS OF REGIONAL DISARMAMENT AS WELL AS WORLD DISARMAMENT. LIEVANO THOUGHT THAT THE SOVIET UNION AND CUBA WERE TESTING THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION AND THAT HIS PERCEPTION WAS THAT THE USG WAS AT A DISADVANTAGE IN RESPONDING TO THEIR INITIATIVES BECAUSE OF CONGRESSIONAL STRICTURES AND PRESSURES. THE UNDERSECRETARY STRESSED THE STRONG COMMITMENT OF THE ADMINISTRATION TO ARMS CONTROL. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THE PROBLEM OF RESTRAINTS ON USG ACTIONS BUT SAID THIS WAS A MATTER NOW UNDER REVIEW IN WASHINGTON.

9. LIEVANO POINTED OUT THAT THE COLOMBIAN RECORD ON HUMAN RIGHTS WAS EXCELLENT AND THAT HE PERSONALLY SUPPORTED U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS OBJECTIVES. HE WENT ON TO STATE, HOWEVER, THAT THE U.S. SHOULD BE "LESS BELIGERENT" IN PURSUING THESE OBJECTIVES WITH OFFENDING COUNTRIES AND SUGGESTED THAT BILATERAL APPROACHES WOULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS THAN "BROAD ATTACKS" IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, SUCH AS THE OAS. HE SAID THAT THE U.S., IN HIS VIEW, HAD BEGUN ITS HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN WITH A POLICY THAT WAS TOO ADVANCED BUT NOW SEEMED TO BE DOING "JUST RIGHT" IN HAVING MODERATED ITS POSITION. HE ALSO CAUTIONED THAT WE SHOULD STUDY CAREFULLY INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES IN CONSIDERING WHETHER TO PRESSURE FOR POLITICAL CHANGE IN AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES. IN SOME CASES THERE MIGHT NOT BE AN ACCEPTABLE ALTERNATIVE TO AN EXISTING AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT EXCEPT AN EQUALLY AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT OF COMMUNIST OR EXTREMIST CONTENT, WHICH WOULD BE EQUALLY ABUSIVE OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

10. LIEVANO BELIEVED THAT SUCH BILATERAL APPROACHES TO ENCOURAGE DEMOCRATIC CHANGE AND HUMAN RIGHTS COULD BE EFFECTIVE SINCE THE U.S. STILL POSSESSES GREAT INFLUENCE IN LATIN AMERICA. DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES RESPONSIVE TO HUMAN RIGHTS, SUCH AS COLOMBIA AND VENEZUELA, STOOD READY TO SUPPORT U.S. BILATERAL INITIATIVES.
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